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**American Immigration Law Foundation
Immigration Curriculum Center Lesson Plan**

**The Memory Coat Journey
A Board Game**

Grade Level: 2nd-6th grade

Goal: The game is a teaching tool to be used as a follow-up activity to enrich the storybook.

Objectives: Students will:

- Comprehend the story's content
- Use recall, integrate new vocabulary and make connections.
- Practice role-play
- Understand the circumstances that drove Russian Jews to emigrate.

Materials:

[The Memory Coat](#) by Elvira Woodruff

Book Summary: An immigrant boy's tattered woolen coat helps secure his entrance to America in this thoughtful picture book. Grisha, whose parents have died, now lives with his cousin Rachel's boisterous family in a Russian shtetl. Gisha misses his parents terribly, though he finds comfort in playing storytelling games with Rachel ("they were the best of friends) and in wearing the now-ragged coat sewn by his mother. After the Cossacks terrorize the Jews of the shtetl, Rachel's family flees to America. At Ellis Island an inspector notes a scratch on Grisha's eye and marks his coat, indicating that he is rejected. Luckily quick thinking Rachel turns Grisha's coat inside out, allowing him to pass with the rest of the family. Endnotes supply facts about the plight of Russian Jews in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the mechanics of immigration and the role of Ellis Island.

Dice, poster board, or sturdy foam-core, game pieces-different colors, markers, construction paper, *The Memory Coat* by Elvira Woodruff, Scholastic Press, 1999.

Procedure:

Suggested Use of the Book: This book and game can be used as part of a unit on Immigration, US History, Russian History, My Family and Community, All About Me, or Feelings and Personal Values.

Lesson One: Teacher will take a picture walk and read aloud, followed by study of immigration and the history of Ellis Island.

Lesson Two: Students practice their understanding of the book and history of Ellis Island by playing the game of The Memory Coat Journey.

Lesson Three: Students create coats about their cultural background by decorating grocery paper bags.

Directions:

1. To begin the game, each player will roll the die. Whoever has the highest number will go first.
2. The player rolls the die and moves the appropriate number of spaces forward. If the player lands on a square with a coat, draw a card from the coat pile. If the player lands on a square with an "E" and a piece of chalk, draw a card from the matching pile. If there is a question on the card, the player tries to answer it. If the answer is correct, he/she stays. If the answer is not correct, he/she goes back to their previous spot. In the case of the "E" cards, the player follows directions on the card. The answers to the questions could be found on the separate instruction sheet.
3. The first player to land on the Statue of Liberty wins the game.

Questions for Coat Cards

1. What is a shtetl? *A small town in Russia where Jews lived.*
2. Name one occupation in the town shtetl. *Cobblers, blacksmith, tailors, shopkeepers.*
3. What does "Kibbud av v'em mean? *"Be quiet"*
4. What did Rachel and Grish enjoy doing together for fun? *Tachel loved to tell stories and Grisha loved to draw pictures.*
5. How did Grisha lose his parents? They died in an epidemic. *They were ill.*
6. Why did Grisha move to Rachel's house? *Because Grisha's parents died in an epidemic.*
7. Why were Rachel's mother and grandmother worried about Grisha being outdoors in the cold? *His coat was threadbare.*

8. How did he feel when they offered him a new coat? *He was angry.*
9. What is a synagogue? *A Jewish temple, a place where Jews go to worship.*
10. Who were the Cossacks? *They were Russians who were looking to kill anyone who was Jewish.*
11. What was the Cossacks intent? *To kill Jewish people.*
12. Why did Rachel's family leave Russia? *Russia was not a safe place to live for Jewish people.*
13. What were some of Rachel's family's fears about the journey? *The long hard ocean voyage, the dangers along the way, illness.*
14. What were some of the fears that they anticipated would happen at Ellis Island? *They would be turned away, they would be questioned about their money, be inspected to make sure they were healthy, whether they would be able to take care of themselves, they would be separated.*
15. What does "Bubba" mean? *Grandmother*
16. Why did Bubba want to make a new coat for Grisha? *It was tattered and torn and they wanted to make a good impression.*
17. Why was Grisha's coat so important to him? *The inside of the coat is lined with wool of his mother's coat and it a way for him to still feel his mother's touch*
18. Name three means of transportation they used to get to America? *Wagon, train, ship*
19. what did Rachel and Grisha do to pass their time on the ship? *They played their story telling game.*
20. How did Grisha scratch his eye when they were waiting in line at Ellis Island? *Rachel fell over him when she was pretending to be a bird.*
21. What did the doctor use to examine Grisha's eye? *A buttonhook.*
22. What did the doctor do after examining Grisha's eye? *He wrote a large letter E in chalk on the back of his coat.*
23. What language other than Russian did the family speak? *Yiddish*
24. What was Rachel's idea to solve the situation of the mark on Grisha's coat? *Rachel turned the coat inside out.*
25. How did the second doctor treat Grisha? *The doctor was nice and he spoke Yiddish.*

26. What was the difference between the two doctors that Rachel's family met at Ellis Island? *The second doctor was patient, kind and spoke Yiddish. The first one was not patient, not nice and does not speak Yiddish.*

27. Did Grisha pass the second exam? *Yes.*

28. What happened to Grisha's coat? *The coat was passed down to his children and grandchildren.*